

APRIL 2, 1976

THE TEN-DAY TRUCE IN LEBANON

ANNCR: VOA NEWS ANALYST RONALD J. DUNLAVEY DISCUSSES THE TEN-DAY TRUCE IN LEBANON:

VOICE: THE SITUATION HAS BRIGHTENED A BIT IN LEBANON, WITH THE AGREEMENT TO OBSERVE A TEN-DAY TRUCE. ANYONE FAMILIAR WITH THE HISTORY OF LEBANESE CEASEFIRES---OF WHICH THERE HAVE BEEN ABOUT TWENTY---IS JUSTIFIED IN TAKING A PESSIMISTIC OUTLOOK. NEVERTHELESS, THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE THAT THE LEBANESE, HAVING TAKEN THE MIDDLE EAST TO THE BRINK OF ANOTHER REGIONAL WAR, HAVE PULLED UP SHORT ONCE AND FOR ALL, AND MAY AT LAST HAVE FOUND THE ROAD TO AN ACCEPTABLE SETTLEMENT OF THEIR TROUBLED AFFAIRS.

TEN DAYS FROM NOW THE PICTURE SHOULD BE SOMEWHAT CLEARER. FOR DURING THAT TIME---OR SO IT APPEARS---THE LEBANESE PARLIAMENT WILL CHOOSE A NEW PRESIDENT AND PLAN SOME CONSTITUTIONAL AND SOCIAL REFORMS SOUGHT BY THE COUNTRY'S MOSLEM POPULATION. HOW EXTENSIVE THESE REFORMS WOULD BE IS NOT CERTAIN---BUT AT LEAST SOME OF THE MOSLEMS ARE CALLING FOR AN END TO THE OLD CONFESSIONAL SYSTEM UNDER WHICH CHRISTIAN AND MOSLEM POLITICAL POWER WAS SHARED ACCORDING TO A COMPLICATED FORMULA APPORTIONING CERTAIN GOVERNMENTAL POSITIONS TO REPRESENTATIVES OF CERTAIN RELIGIOUS SECTS. IN THE PAST, THE CHRISTIANS HAVE OPPOSED THIS.

WHAT IS APPARENT IN THIS COMPLICATED GAME OF POLITICAL CHESS IS THAT JUST ABOUT EVERYBODY CONCERNED HAS COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THERE'S LITTLE PROFIT IN FURTHER FIGHTING. CONTINUANCE OF THE WAR MEANS MORE BLOODSHED AND FURTHER DISLOCATION OF THE COUNTRY'S SHATTERED ECONOMIC LIFE. ANY

PEACE ESTABLISHED BY MILITARY VICTORY WOULD BE FRAGILE AND TRANSITORY. OUTSIDE INTERVENTION WOULD BE PRACTICALLY INEVITABLE, WITH NOT ONLY THE SYRIANS COMING IN BUT ALSO--- POSSIBLY---THE ISRAELIS. FURTHERMORE, IRAQ HAS THREATENED TO INVADE SYRIA IF SYRIA GOES INTO LEBANON. AND THEN THERE'S THE MOST DANGEROUS POSSIBILITY OF ALL ---WHICH IS THAT A CHAIN-REACTION CONFLICT MIGHT BE TOUCHED OFF AND SPREAD THROUGH THE MIDDLE EAST, CONCEIVABLY INVOLVING, AT SOME POINT, THE SOVIET UNION AND THE UNITED STATES.

GIVEN THESE BLEAK ALTERNATIVES, IT IS NOT ALTOGETHER SURPRISING THAT THE LEBANESE FACTIONS HAVE AGREED TO A TRUCE.

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BAC/RTD